

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 IO-10 ISO-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00 OTPE-00

EB-07 FCC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 OC-05 USIA-06 BIB-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USINT BAGHDAD

USMISSION GENEVA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUWAIT 2245

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETEL, BMEP, KU

SUBJECT: ARAB COMMUNICATIONS MINISTERS TO FORM ARAB COMSAT

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CORP.

REF: A) KUWAIT 0312 B) BEIRUT 6369

1. MAIN RESULT OF THE ARAB TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION CONFERENCE WHICH CONCLUDED HERE MAY 24 WAS AGREEMENT TO HOLD MEETING ARAB MINISTERS OF COMMUNICATIONS IN KUWAIT. PURPOSE OF MEETING IS TO GIVE FINAL AGREEMENT TO FORMATION OF ARAB COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CORP. ONE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE AND ONE GOK OFFICIAL STATED MINISTERIAL MEETING WOULD BE HELD HERE IN JUNE WHILE ANOTHER, MORE SENIOR GOK OFFICIAL, MENTIONED OCTOBER AS THE LIKELY DATE.

2. EMBOFFS HAVE TALKED TO TWO SENIOR KUWAITI OFFICIALS INVOLVED WITH THE CONFERENCE TO TRY TO GAIN FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE PLANNED CORP. OUR IMPRESSIONS ARE THAT SOME DISAGREEMENTS EXISTED AMONG THE CONFERENCE DELEGATIONS AS TO WHERE THE CORPORATION HEADQUARTERS SHOULD BE BASED AND THE CHARTER OF THE NEW COMPANY. ONE OFFICIAL SUGGESTED THAT THERE MAY BE THREE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS INCLUDING THE CORP. MAIN OFFICE. KUWAIT SEEMS TO WISH TO BECOME FOR TIME BEING MAIN HEADQUARTERS FOR THE COMPANY AND IS WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE GENEROUSLY TO THE COMPANY'S FORMATION FOR THAT PRIVILEGE. HOWEVER, EVEN THE KUWAITIS CONCEDE THAT IN THE LONG TERM CAIRO, GIVEN ITS CENTRAL LOCATION AND POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DOMINANCE OF THE ARAB WORLD, WOULD BE THE MORE LOGICAL CHOICE. KUWAITIS, HOWEVER, ARE DETERMINED THAT AT MINIMUM TO BE A REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE COMPANY. KUWAIT'S MAIN COMPETITION SEEMS TO HAVE COME FROM LEBANON, BUT GIVEN THE PRESENT UNSTABLE CONDITIONS THERE, IT IS AN UNLIKELY CHOICE.

3. KUWAIT OFFICIALS ALSO INDICATED THEY NOT SURE THAT ALL ARAB COUNTRIES WOULD AGREE TO JOIN THE NEW COMPANY ALTHOUGH THE COMPANY WAS TO BE "NON-POLITICAL" AND EMPHASIZE THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS TO ACCRUE FROM THE PROJECT. THE KUWAITIS BELIEVE THE MINISTERIAL MEETING WILL RESULT IN FORMATION OF SUCH A COMPANY EVEN IF SOME COUNTRIES OPT FOR THE PRESENT NOT TO JOIN. KUWAITIS SEEMED WILLING TO EVEN FUND SHARES OF SOME POORER ARAB STATES TO SECURE THEIR APPROVAL FOR SCHEME WHICH KUWAITIS SEE AS SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR GOAL OF GREATER ARAB ECONOMIC COLLABORATION AND INTEGRATION.

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4. KUWAITIS ALSO GAVE US INFORMATION WHICH SUPPORTS REF B CONCLUSION THAT INITIALLY TWO SATELLITES WILL BE LAUNCHED. MAY 24 ISSUE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE "KUWAIT TIMES" CLAIMS PROJECT IS ESTIMATED TO COST \$365 MILLION. HOWEVER, KUWAITIS SAID TOTAL COST OF PROJECT DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE SINCE IT WILL REQUIRE BUILDING INDETERMINATE NUMBER EARTH SATELLITE STATIONS AND ORBITING TWO OR MORE SATELLITES. HUGHES TOOL CO. AND OTHERS

SEEM ALREADY TO HAVE HAD SUBSTANTIAL CONTACTS WITH THOSE INVOLVED
WITH PROJECT. OFFICIAL SHOWED EMBOFF JOINT PROPOSAL OUTLINE
FOR PROJECT SUBMITTED BY HUGHES IN A CONSORTIUM WITH NEC,
THOMSON CSF, AND ANOTHER EUROPEAN COMPANY. OFFICIAL SAID EARLIER
HUGHES HAD ALSO MADE PROPOSAL ON ITS OWN.

5. WE ASSUME MOST MAJOR U.S. COMPANIES WHICH COULD SUBSTANTIALLY
BENEFIT FROM THIS PROJECT ARE ALREADY AWARE OF IT, AND BELIEVE
REAL FREE-FOR-ALL WILL NOT COMMENCE UNTIL COMPANY FORMED AND
HEADQUARTERS BECOME OPERATIVE.
MAU

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